

HOST FORUM

2023

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Advocacy Opportunities & Crafting your Story

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U.S. Secretary of State Blinken

“People -to-people exchanges bring our world closer together and convey the best of America to the world especially to its young people.”

Remarks at State Department
January 27, 2021



Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961

The Beginning

In 1945, the Fulbright Act introduced by freshman Sen. J. William Fulbright from Arkansas and signed into law by President Truman in 1946. The bill provided for the use of proceeds from the sale of surplus war property to support “the promotion of international good will through the exchange of students in the fields of education, culture, and science.”

The 1961 Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act, also known as the Fulbright-Hays Act, was introduced by Sen. Fulbright in the Senate and Rep. Hays of Ohio in the House. The bill combined several laws from the past, while adding new provisions to strengthen the program’s authority and reach.



BridgeUSA Program : Basic Talking Points

- BridgeUSA was established as part of the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act in 1961, previously known as the Fulbright -Hays Act
- The Exchange Visitor (J) non-immigrant visa category is for individuals approved to participate in work and study based exchange
- The J-1 visa provides numerous opportunities to international students looking to travel and gain experience in the U.S.
- As part of the Summer Work Travel program, college and university students enrolled full-time and pursuing studies at post-secondary accredited academic institutions located outside the United States come to the U.S.



What's Happening Now: Congress & States

H.Res. 481 – Supporting BridgeUSA

Rep. Moore (UT) introduced Resolution in June that highlights the importance of BridgeUSA, its economic impact for American businesses and a support for expanding U.S. public diplomacy.

FY24 Amendment #133: Eliminates Ed and Cultural Exchange Program Funding

Sen. Biggs' (AZ) amendment will likely receive a vote before the end of this week.

The amendment would zero out the budget for all State Department Educational and Cultural Programs.

BridgeUSA Support Letter from Governors

Gov. Sununu (NH) penned letter in support of BridgeUSA that highlights three priorities for states and local businesses:

- 1) Modernizing State Department Processes
- 2) Visa Processing and Communication w/States
- 3) Expand Program in Face of Increased Demand

Shown Here:
Introduced in House (03/29/2023)

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2301

To provide for a limitation on availability of funds for Department of State, Administration of Foreign Affairs, Educational and Cultural Exchange Programs for fiscal year 2024.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 29, 2023

Mr. BIGGS (for himself, Mr. ROSENDALE, Mr. GAETZ, Mr. GOOD of Virginia, Mr. ROY, and Mr. CRANE) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

A BILL

To provide for a limitation on availability of funds for Department of State, Administration of Foreign Affairs, Educational and Cultural Exchange Programs for fiscal year 2024.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. LIMITATION ON AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS FOR DEPARTMENT OF STATE, ADMINISTRATION OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2024.

Notwithstanding any other provision of the law, amounts authorized to be appropriated or otherwise available for Department of State, Administration of Foreign Affairs, Educational and Cultural Exchange Programs for fiscal year 2024 may not exceed \$0.

BridgeUSA Program Funding Threat & Call to Action

Tell your Representative to vote no on Amendment #133

We're asking for your help to defeat an amendment that would defund the Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and all but eliminate DOS exchange programs.

Last Friday, Rep. Andy Biggs (R-AZ) filed an amendment (Amendment #133) to the FY2024 State Department funding bill that would eliminate all funding for Education and Cultural Exchange programs.

Please write your Representative using our letter and ask them to oppose Amendment #133 and to show their support for international exchange programs. The bill will likely be voted on **this Thursday, September 28**, so it is critical that you reach out to your Representative today.

We encourage you to share this campaign with colleagues, partners, and fellow exchange supporters. Thank you!

Compose Your Message

- US Representative

Subject

Vote "no" on SFOPS Amendment 133 attemptin

Message Body

I write to ask you to oppose Amendment 133 introduced by Rep. Any Biggs that seeks to eliminate all funding for the Educational and Cultural Exchange programs account in the Department of State, Foreign

Enter Your Info

Your Information

Prefix * First Name * Last Name *

Email *

Home Information

Street Address *

ZIP Code * Enter Zip for City and State

Send me email alerts

Remember me

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. RES. 481

Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that BridgeUSA exchange programs are vital to the economy and national interests of the United States, and that Congress should prioritize robust support to ensure equitable opportunities for Americans and people from other countries.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 7, 2023

Mr. MOORE of Utah (for himself, Ms. KUSTER, Mr. PAPPAS, Mr. GALLAGHER, and Mr. SMITH of New Jersey) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that BridgeUSA exchange programs are vital to the economy and national interests of the United States, and that Congress should prioritize robust support to ensure equitable opportunities for Americans and people from other countries.

Whereas BridgeUSA (formerly the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program) was created alongside the Peace Corps and United States Agency for International Development during the Cold War to promote the diplomatic and foreign affairs goals of the United States, goals the Department of State still advances in administering BridgeUSA as Federal cultural exchange programs to this day;



STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

CHRISTOPHER T. SUNUNU
Governor

August 23, 2023

Joseph R. Biden
The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I am reaching out to you on a critically important issue for the State of New Hampshire. While I was pleased to see the number of J1 visas issued increase to pre-pandemic levels and improvements to visa processing, I am requesting we continue on this pathway to create more efficiencies and increase the pool of visas available. Specifically, I write today requesting that your administration continue to support three important aspects of the program to ensure its continued success: (1) permanently implement critical modernization reforms including electronic forms and streamlining the interview process; (2) continue prioritizing visa processing; and (3) provide adequate resources and lift the 2011 Summer Work Travel (SWT) moratorium and cap.

1. Modernization: Universal Adoption of the Visa Interview Waiver

This summer, sponsors of BridgeUSA programs were able to take advantage of a modernization initiative that allowed the DS-2019 Form to become digitized and transmitted electronically, removing a costly, and antiquated paper-based process. This modernization dramatically improved the program by providing long overdue efficiencies and cost savings. We believe that there may be similar improvements that could be undertaken within the visa process that would further modernize the program and reduce staff time and costs at posts overseas. One such initiative would be the universal adoption of a visa interview waiver for participants who have successfully completed a program and are applying for participation in the same or another BridgeUSA program category.

Additionally, streamlining the visa process (interview waivers for second-timers) to allow for any-time processing of SWT and Camp Counselor visas similar to what is now happening with F-1 student visa processing and other non-seasonal J-1 categories (like au pair and intern), and making enhancements to the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) for improved reporting would further modernize and enhance the program.

2. Visa Prioritization and Communication with Stakeholders

I appreciate that consulates are prioritizing J-1 BridgeUSA applicants due to sensitivity to being time-based and eligibility requirements, however, states would like more information for state businesses and participants about interview availability ahead of the start of the season as well as non-return information

Ideas to Consider When Crafting Your Story

Introduce Yourself: Why
Are You Here?

Who Is In The Meeting?:
Policy Priorities?
Committee Membership?

Describe/Explain
BridgeUSA

J-1 Non-Immigrant Visa
vs. Other Visa Types

How Does Your Business
Use Summer Work Travel?

How Does the Program
Impact Your Community?

How Does SWT support
Public Diplomacy?

How Can Your
Congressperson Help?

Are There Any Policy
Concerns or Threats?

Are There Unique SWT
Issues In Your State?

How Can Your Business
Help the Congressperson?

Share Your SWT Stories
and Celebrations.

What's Ahead: 2024 Elections

Presidential Election

Biden/Democratic win would continue slow rule change, support for diplomacy and diversity

Trump/Republican win would likely bring funding and staffing cutbacks across the board for the State and Ed Depts. Likely, too, face nationalism, isolationism, less gov't, pro-defense budget, less cultural exchange

Congressional Balance and Leadership

House is a tossup with slight advantages depending on how the remainder of 2023 shakes out and early 2024. Dems could flip 5 seats to win House. (Currently 222-212 balance)

Senate GOP has chance to flip chamber with 2 seats (if Pres stays Dem.).

BridgeUSA Support from Governors, Chambers, and Associations

Currently, the governorships are nearly even with 26 Republicans and 24 Democrats.

11 states will hold gubernatorial elections in 2024.

Contact Information

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Good Luck!

Enjoy
Yourself!

